

HOLOCAUST LEARNING TRUNK PROJECT

TEACHING GUIDE
(INTRODUCTION EXCERPT)
2012–2013

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WHAT IS THE HOLOCAUST LEARNING TRUNK PROJECT?

The Holocaust Learning Trunk Project provides textual, visual, audio, and digital materials that when combined ensure students gain positive character development and a deeper understanding of importance of good citizenship.

Core objectives:

- emphasize that hate is taught, not an innate trait by birth and it is a person's choices that determine their role(s)
- emphasize stories of rescue to demonstrate the significance of personal responsibility
- emphasize personal testimony and not statistics
- emphasize that all Jews were victims but not all victims were Jews
- emphasize examples of non-violent resistance to demonstrate that even though most victims were not victims as a result of their choices but rather the choices of perpetrators, many victims made the choice to not let the Nazis take away their spirit and humanity

HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE COMMON CORE?

Each lesson module, activity module, and worksheet were designed or directly derived from the tasks, strategies, and themes outlined in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards.

Middle school students continue to expand their understanding of history by using multiple sources and perspectives to build interpretations of past events. While studying the Holocaust through this process, students acquire an improved understanding of the basic civil rights in a democracy. Additionally, students will better understand their role in their community, nation, and international community.

The modules are developed with the goal of teaching critical thinking skills to students in order to provide them with a broad view of societies, cultures, and belief systems. In gaining this perspective students can recognize and respect people's difference and realize the dangers of prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination. It encourages the acceptance of diversity in a pluralistic society.

It is important to learn the lessons of the Holocaust and the skill of critical thinking, so that students can apply these values and strategies to their own decision-making process. Each lesson module provides students with an opportunity to examine their daily lives, the choices they make, and how those choices impact others. **Personal responsibility is a central theme of Holocaust education** and the examination of this allows students to recognize when he/she is in a situation where he/she must make a choice instead of standing by in apathy. Students should not be told what decision they are expected to make, but in learning the lessons of the Holocaust he/she will be able to use their critical thinking skills to arrive at the right decision and understand why it is the right decision. Through studying the lessons of the Holocaust, students are taught how to make moral and ethical choices.

CRITERIA FOR TRUNK CONTENTS

One of the main objectives of the trunk contents is to give the Holocaust a human voice. While studying the Holocaust, it is important to read first person accounts, eyewitness testimonies, or stories focusing on individual experiences. Doing so provides a greater understanding of the complexity of the Holocaust by demonstrating that the Holocaust is more than analyses, statistics, and a period in history. The statistics especially, though staggering, should not be the emphasis of Holocaust studies.

Furthermore, providing students with the opportunity to learn about the themes of the Holocaust through personal accounts allows students to connect with what they're learning. The legacy of the story of Anne Frank and her belief that despite everything people are truly good at heart has connected with millions of people throughout the world for decades. In this way, stories of survival, resilience, and standing up in the face of bigotry and discrimination is more powerful than the legacy and reputation of the Nazis and their crimes.

The Holocaust Learning Trunk Project coordinators, Georgia Commission on the Holocaust's Educator Advisory Committee, and other advisors have selected challenging, thought-provoking resources and reviewed the materials in the trunks based on the following criteria:

- Age appropriateness
- Historical accuracy
- Social, political, and cultural context
- Variety of genres: memoir, diary, autobiographical novel, non-fiction, primary sources, play, etc.
- Balance of personal stories, primary sources, and factual evidence

These materials provide students with the opportunity to expand their understanding of the past by using multiple sources and perspectives to build interpretations of past events. Materials are varied according to general learning styles: visual, audio, kinetic/tactile.

Materials that can have accompanying lesson modules must provide ability to teach the following:

- geography
- vocabulary
- examination of historical events
- combination of testimony and factual evidence
- relevance to today
- allow students to:
 - construct a timeline
 - discuss themes
 - write a response journal reflecting on themes
 - develop critical thinking skills
 - examine and process historical and textual evidence

Materials and activities should not trivialize the Holocaust. Activities and teaching strategies that should be avoided:

- word scrambles, crossword puzzles, counting objects, model building, and other gimmicky exercises
- simulation exercises

WHAT IS THE HOLOCAUST?

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

THE HOLOCAUST IS THE STATE-SPONSORED SYSTEMATIC PERSECUTION AND ANNIHILATION OF EUROPEAN JEWRY BY NAZI GERMANY AND ITS COLLABORATORS BETWEEN 1933 AND 1945.

Jews were the primary victims – six million were murdered; Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), people with mental and physical disabilities, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi Germany.

ROLES IN THE HOLOCAUST

GEORGIA COMMISSION ON THE HOLOCAUST

PERPETRATORS

Those responsible for the crimes, deaths, and acts of hatred. The perpetrators were not beasts but human beings who made **moral and ethical choices**. They chose to commit evil and violate human rights. Perpetrators were not born with hatred – they were taught hatred.

VICTIMS

Groups and individuals who were targeted for destruction or decimation for **racial, ethnic or national reasons**.

BYSTANDERS

The largest group of people during the Holocaust. Bystanders are those who remained silent, passive, and indifferent. It is vital to teach and discuss the consequences of when that happens when people make the choice to be a bystander.

RESCUERS, RESISTERS & PARTISANS

Individuals or groups of individuals who made choices and risked their own lives to save others and stand up against bigotry, prejudice, and hate.

COLLABORATORS

Individuals or groups who worked with the Nazis regardless of whether they shared a common goal or believed in the Nazi racial ideology. Collaborators made the choice to join and assist the Nazis for many reasons. Examples include the Axis powers who enforced anti-Jewish laws, Norwegian police who assisted in deportations of Jews to Auschwitz, villagers in Poland who dug mass graves for bodies after shootings, etc.

LIBERATORS

Allied troops responsible for liberating concentration and extermination camps throughout Europe.

“WHY TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST?”

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

The goal of teaching the Holocaust is to understand what the Holocaust is, why we must study it, and how we can prevent future genocide.

The Holocaust provides one of the most effective subjects for an examination of basic moral issues. A structured inquiry into this history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behavior.

Study of the event also addresses one of the central mandates of education in the United States, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen.

Through a study of these topics, students come to realize that:

- Democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained, but need to be appreciated, nurtured, and protected.
- Study of the Holocaust assists students in developing an understanding of the roots and ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society.
- Thinking about these events can help students to develop an awareness of the value of pluralism and encourages acceptance of diversity in a pluralistic society.
- The Holocaust provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent in the face of the oppression of others.
- A study of these topics helps students to think about the use and abuse of power, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide.

“GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST”

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

AGE APPROPRIATENESS

Students in grades 6 and above demonstrate the ability to empathize with individual eyewitness accounts and to attempt to understand the complexities of this history, including the scope and scale of the events. While elementary students are able to empathize with individual accounts, they often have difficulty placing them in a larger historical context. Such demonstrable developmental differences have traditionally shaped social studies curricula throughout the country; in most states, students are not introduced to European history and geography—the context of the Holocaust—before middle school. Elementary school can be an ideal location to begin discussion of the value of diversity and the danger of bias and prejudice. These critical themes can be addressed through local and national historical events; this will be reinforced during later study of the Holocaust.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The teaching of Holocaust history demands of educators a high level of sensitivity and a keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. The following recommendations, while reflecting approaches that would be appropriate for effective teaching in general, are particularly relevant to Holocaust education.

1. DEFINE THE TERM “HOLOCAUST”

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

2. DO NOT TEACH OR IMPLY THAT THE HOLOCAUST WAS INEVITABLE

Just because a historical event took place, and it is documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen. This seemingly obvious concept is often overlooked by students and teachers alike. **The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act.** Focusing on those decisions leads to insights into history and human nature and can better help your students to become critical thinkers.

3. AVOID SIMPLE ANSWERS TO COMPLEX QUESTIONS

The history of the Holocaust raises difficult questions about human behavior and the context within which individual decisions are made. Be wary of oversimplification. Seek instead to nuance the story. Allow students to think about the many factors and events that contributed to the Holocaust and often made decision-making difficult and uncertain.

4. STRIVE FOR PRECISION OF LANGUAGE

Any study of the Holocaust touches upon nuances of human behavior. Because of the complexity of

the history, there is a temptation to generalize and, thus, to distort the facts (e.g., "all concentration camps were killing centers" or "all Germans were collaborators"). Rather, you must strive to help your students clarify the information presented and encourage them to distinguish, for example, the differences between prejudice and discrimination, collaborators and bystanders, armed and spiritual resistance, direct orders and assumed orders, concentration camps and killing centers, and guilt and responsibility.

Words that describe human behavior often have multiple meanings. Resistance, for example, usually refers to a physical act of armed revolt. During the Holocaust, it also encompassed partisan activity; the smuggling of messages, food, and weapons; sabotage; and actual military engagement. Resistance may also be thought of as willful disobedience such as continuing to practice religious and cultural traditions in defiance of the rules or creating fine art, music, and poetry inside ghettos and concentration camps. For many, simply maintaining the will to remain alive in the face of abject brutality was an act of spiritual resistance.

Try to **avoid stereotypical descriptions**. Remind your students that, although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them tend to stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality. Thus, all Germans cannot be characterized as Nazis nor should any nationality be reduced to a singular or one-dimensional description.

5. STRIVE FOR BALANCE IN ESTABLISHING WHOSE PERSPECTIVE INFORMS YOUR STUDY OF THE HOLOCAUST

One helpful technique for engaging students in a discussion of the Holocaust is to think of the participants involved as belonging to one of four categories: victims, perpetrators, rescuers, and bystanders. Examine the actions, motives, and decisions of each group. Portray all individuals, including victims and perpetrators, as human beings who are capable of moral judgment and independent decision making.

As with any topic, students should make careful distinctions about sources of information. Students should be encouraged to consider why a particular text was written, who wrote it, who the intended audience was, whether there were any biases inherent in the information, whether any gaps occurred in discussion, whether omissions in certain passages were inadvertent or not, and how the information has been used to interpret various events. Strongly encourage your students to investigate carefully the origin and authorship of all material, particularly anything found on the Internet.

6. AVOID COMPARISONS OF PAIN

One cannot presume that the horror of an individual, family, or community destroyed by the Nazis was any greater than that experienced by victims of other genocides. Avoid generalizations that suggest exclusivity such as "the victims of the Holocaust suffered the most cruelty ever faced by a people in the history of humanity."

7. DO NOT ROMANTICIZE HISTORY

Accuracy of fact along with a balanced perspective on the history must be a priority.

8. CONTEXTUALIZE THE HISTORY

Events of the Holocaust and, particularly, how individuals and organizations behaved at that time, should be placed in historical context. The occurrence of the Holocaust must be studied in the context of European history as a whole to give students a perspective on the precedents and circumstances that may have contributed to it.

9. TRANSLATE STATISTICS INTO PEOPLE

In any study of the Holocaust, the sheer number of victims challenges easy comprehension. Show that individual people—families of grandparents, parents, and children—are behind the statistics and emphasize that within the larger historical narrative is a diversity of personal experience. Precisely because they portray people in the fullness of their lives and not just as victims, first-person accounts and memoir literature provide students with a way of making meaning out of collective numbers and add individual voices to a collective experience.

10. MAKE RESPONSIBLE METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

One of the primary concerns of educators teaching the history of the Holocaust is how to present horrific, historical images in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Graphic material should be used judiciously and only to the extent necessary to achieve the objective of the lesson. Try to select images and texts that do not exploit the students' emotional vulnerability or that might be construed as disrespectful of the victims themselves. Do not skip any of the suggested topics for study of the Holocaust because the visual images are too graphic. Use other approaches to address the material.

In studying complex human behavior, many teachers rely upon simulation exercises meant to help students "experience" unfamiliar situations. Even when great care is taken to prepare a class for such an activity, simulating experiences from the Holocaust remains pedagogically unsound. It is best to draw upon numerous primary sources, provide survivor testimony, and **refrain from simulation games that lead to a trivialization of the subject matter.**

LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

It is optional but important to notify parents/guardians when you are starting a Holocaust related unit with your students. If you feel it necessary to send a letter home with your students to communicate with their parents/guardians, a template has been included in this guide to use or reference for your own letter draft.

Regardless of whether or not you send a letter home with your students here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Encourage students and parents to take part in discussions at home that mirror those that take place in the classroom.** Doing so allows students to digest what he/she has learned or confronted in the classroom while in the comfort of their home. At school they are participating in activities and discussions with their peers and it can be beneficial for a student to be able to participate in similar discussions with his/her family.
- **The ability to discuss topics such as personal responsibility, respect for diversity, or other Holocaust specific themes will assist in the development of a student's critical thinking skills.** Remind students during discussions to support their arguments with textual and/or factual evidence. He/she can bring their response journal home and share their assignments and reflections with their parents/guardians.
- If a parent/guardian is concerned over the subject matter assure him/her that **their child will not be exposed to graphic images or concepts beyond the student's maturity.** You will not be hosting any simulation activities.
- **Encourage the parents/guardians to review the book(s) their child will be reading so they can familiarize themselves with the story.**
- Remind parents/guardians that you will **ensure your classroom remains a safe and positive setting** where students can express themselves without fear of judgment or confrontation.
- If parents/guardians express further concerns, indicate that **you will be closely following guidelines for teaching the Holocaust as outlined by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the state-mandated Common Core curriculum.** Furthermore, you will be using and referencing materials from Holocaust-education authorities such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Simon Wiesenthal Center/Museum of Tolerance, Yad Vashem: World Center for Holocaust Research, Documentation, Education and Commemoration, and the Anti-Defamation League.
- Provide parents/guardians with copies of one or all of the following documents found in this guide:
 - Why Teach the Holocaust?
 - Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust
 - What Have We Learned?
- While completing the unit, be sure to use the student reflection sheet located on pages 13-14. After concluding the unit, encourage your students to take their completed reflection sheet home with them to review with their parents/guardians. This will help **ensure that students are not only safely brought into the unit but they are safely led out.**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The Georgia Commission on the Holocaust and the Georgia Department of Education have sponsored the Holocaust Learning Trunk Project. Each trunk contains a full complement of educational materials about the Holocaust and World War II. These trunks and materials are used as a supplement to curriculum already in place and to assist educators in fulfilling the state's Standards of Excellence through the use of the Common Core.

State School Superintendent, Dr. John D. Barge, has endorsed the Holocaust Learning Trunk Project with these words: "This goes along with the philosophy of education that I take, which originated with Martha Berry – Education of the head, hands and heart."

According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, study of the events of the Holocaust addresses one of the central mandates of education in the United States, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen. The Holocaust Learning Trunk Project provides textual, visual, audio, and digital materials that when combined ensure students gain positive character development and a deeper understanding of importance of good citizenship.

The materials, lessons, and activities emphasize the important of looking beyond the facts and statistics to examine personal testimonies and give this era of history a voice with significance outside the classroom.

Through teaching and studying the Holocaust, as a class we will examine the historical context as well as its moral and social importance in our society. This subject raises questions of justice and explores concepts of prejudice, discrimination, and racism.

By learning the lessons of the Holocaust, students acquire an improved understanding of the basic civil rights in a democracy. Students will also better understand their role in their local community, nation, and international community.

In the next few weeks your child will be reading: _____
_____ by _____

Please indicate that your child has permission to read this book and/or use these resources:

Signature _____ Date _____

If you would like to learn more about the Holocaust Learning Trunk Project, please visit www.holocaust.georgia.gov

Thank you,

“WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?”

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

THE HOLOCAUST AND HUMANITY

Remembering the Holocaust as a specific event does not mean seeing it in isolation. It means beginning with the specific to give foundation to larger truths.

The Holocaust begins with Jews as targets; but takes in all humanity as victim. Once the Holocaust began, values and morality fell victim just as surely as did lives.

From the Holocaust, we begin to understand the dangers of all forms of discrimination, prejudice and bigotry: hatreds which, in their extreme forms, can lead to the world evils of mass slaughter and genocide-and, on the personal level, can endanger our ethical being.

From the Holocaust, we can learn of the way evil can become commonplace and acceptable so long as change is gradual – so that no one takes a stand until it is too late.

From the Holocaust, we can examine all the roles we humans play: victim or executioner; oppressor or liberator; collaborator or bystander; rescuer; or witness.

STUDENT REFLECTION

Use the worksheet on pages 13-14 to review these points before, during, and after your Holocaust unit.

STUDENT REFLECTION

Student Name _____ Date _____

DIRECTIONS: Please fill out both sides of this worksheet.

BOOKS(S) ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST I READ DURING THIS UNIT:

HOLOCAUST LEARNING TRUNK PROJECT ACTIVITIES I DID DURING THIS UNIT:

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS OF THE HOLOCAUST?

BEFORE WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST?	DURING WHAT DO I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST?	AFTER WHAT HAVE I LEARNED ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST?

OVERVIEW OF SECOND EDITION TRUNK CONTENTS

BOOKS (Memoir, non-fiction, historical fiction)

- Classroom sets:
 - (30) *Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank
 - (15) *Night* by Elie Wisel (recommended for mature students and advanced readers only)
 - (30) *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry
 - (15) *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* by Celeste Raspanti
- Reading group sets:
 - (5) *Behind the Secret Window: A Memoir of a Hidden Childhood During World War Two*
 - (5) *Four Perfect Pebbles*
 - (5) *I Am a Star*
 - (5) *Jacob's Rescue: A Holocaust Story*
 - (5) *Kindertransport*
 - (5) *The Diary of Petr Ginz*
 - (5) *The Upstairs Room*
 - (5) *When Hitler Stole the Pink Rabbit*
 - (2 sets) *Maus: A Survivor's Tale (Volume I: My Father Bleeds History, Volume II: Here My Troubles Began)*
- Non-fiction:
 - (1) *The Holocaust Through Primary Sources: Kristallnacht - The Nazi Terror that Began the Holocaust*
 - (1) *The Holocaust Through Primary Sources: Liberation - Stories of Survival from the Holocaust*
 - (1) *The Holocaust Through Primary Sources: Saving children from the Holocaust - The Kindertransport*
 - (1) *Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles saved Jews in the Holocaust*

EDUCATOR RESOURCES

- *Holocaust Learning Trunk Project: Teaching Guide*
- *Teaching the Holocaust: A CD-ROM for Educators*

VISUAL AIDES

- DVDs
 - *The Short Life of Anne Frank*
 - *I'm Still Here: Real Diaries of Young People Who Lived During the Holocaust*
- Posters
 - "Badges of Hate" poster
 - "First They Came" poster
 - "Nuremberg Racial Laws, 1935"

AUDIO

- *Confronting Hatred: Why the Lessons of the Holocaust Continue to Matter* (podcast series on CD, transcripts included in full *Teaching Guide*)

ACTIVITY SETS

- *The Holocaust: A Remembrance* (set of 15 original newspaper pages from 1933-1946)
- ID cards of 38 victims from United States Holocaust Memorial Museum